



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Section: *Literature, Linguistics & Criticism***Narrative structure patterns in selected children's book on disabilities**Muhammad Yusuf^{1*}, T. Thyrhaya Zein¹, Nurlela¹, Fikry Prastya Syahputra¹ and Rafizah Mohd Rawian²¹English Department, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia²School of Language, Civilization, and Philosophy, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia*Correspondence: yusuf_my@usu.ac.id**ABSTRACT**

Narrative is one the genres that has unique structure distinguishing it from other genres. This study attempts to investigate the narrative structure patterns in selected children's books on disabilities. This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing content analysis. Qualitative procedures were employed to identify the structures of narrative texts. The data were in the form of text selected from 4 (four) children's books on disabilities. The reason for choosing those books was based on specific criteria namely the diversity of disabilities represented, the popularity of the books, and their availability in Indonesia. The analysis was done by categorizing the generic structures of each text. Referring to the analysis, out of the four texts analyzed, only text number 2 does not include a coda in its structure. Although a coda is not always present in all narrative texts, it is often used as a closing part to provide a reflection or moral message from the story. At this stage, the writer can convey lessons that can be learned from the narrative or story itself. Moreover, it also serves to reaffirm the main message of the story and provide a more holistic conclusion of the story.

KEYWORDS: book, children, disability, narrative structure**Research Journal in Advanced Humanities**

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Introduction

Children have been associated with books from a very young age as books help them develop basic language skills and expand their vocabulary, improving their ability to communicate and engage with others. Book is closely related to reading skill and reading comprehension. A strong foundation in reading skills can prepare them for the next stage of literacy development (Mujahidah et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). In addition, reading can aid children in developing cognitive skills, which support their cognitive development process (Batini et al., 2024; Muzaki & Dawud, 2024). In short, books help children grow as readers and thinkers from an early age. The presence of children's books about disabilities in Indonesia is important, considering the significant number of children with disabilities. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), in 2020, there were approximately 5.6 million children with disabilities in Indonesia. However, literature on children's books about disabilities is still limited. Children with disabilities certainly need specialized books to see their representation in the literature (Blaska, 2004; Pardeck, 2005). It can be as a means to promote the awareness on disabilities (Gilmore & Howard, 2016). The children's stories used for them are expected to depict situations or activities related to their experiences.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth referred to as SFL) is a linguistic theory that can be used to analyze texts, including those found in children's storybooks. This theory emphasizes the use of language in social contexts and its communicative functions (Eggins, 2004; Hajar & Sinar, 2019; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Perales-Escudero, 2018; Saragih, 2006). In the context of this research, SFL helps simplify and understand the structure and textual functions, providing information on how texts function within social, cultural, and environmental contexts.

Genre is understood as a step-by-step activity to reach a goal (Aswani et al., 2023; Hardiningsih et al., 2024; Saragih, 2006; Yusuf, Hanafiah, et al., 2021). There are many kinds of genres since they are differentiated based on its schematic structure, linguistic features, and the communicative purpose. As one of commonly found genre in children's literature, narrative text has the function to amuse the readers (Hanifa et al., 2024; Zein et al., 2019). It usually tells a story that includes the characters in the conflict. Characters can be people, animals, plants, or objects. Generally, the schematic structure of narrative texts can be divided into five components: orientation ^ complication ^ resolution ^ coda (Zein et al., 2019, 2021). In the orientation, the reader is introduced to the main characters and possibly some minor characters. Indications are usually provided about where and when the actions take place. The complication is driven by serious events, and at that point, we usually expect some complication or problem to arise. The sequence of events is where the narrator explains how the characters react to the complication. This includes their feelings and actions, which may be told chronologically or through flashbacks. The audience is given the narrator's perspective. In the resolution, the problem can be resolved positively or negatively, although it is rarely left unresolved. Lastly, the coda is an optional part yet it can be used to insert the moral message of the story.

Narrative structure encompasses how a story is organized, from the introduction of characters and the background of the story, the main conflict, to the resolution of the conflict and the moral message conveyed (Cahyono, 2017; Khan et al., 2021; Yusuf, Widayati, et al., 2021; Zein et al., 2019, 2021; Zen, 2020). In children's books about disabilities, the narrative structure can influence how readers, especially children, understand and identify with disabled characters. For example, how the author portrays the journey of a disabled character in overcoming obstacles and achieving their goals can affect the reader's understanding and empathy towards them. Children use their knowledge of story structure and expressions acquired through previous experiences with books to comprehend new texts and internalize the structure and expressions of stories (Pinkham et al., 2014; Stevens et al., 2010).

Several previous studies are relevant to this research. Gonen et al. (2015) examined picture books depicting individuals with disabilities, analyzing both the content and types of disabilities presented, as well as the accessibility of these books. The research employed a survey design. Within the study's scope, the three largest bookstores in Ankara, Turkey, and online book shopping websites were surveyed, and 234 picture books were reviewed. Among these, 30 picture books depicting individuals with disabilities were included in the study. The findings revealed that, although some examples found in the research were somewhat negative, there were still some picture books that portrayed disabilities accurately and helped children respect individuals with disabilities by providing them with a proper understanding of disabilities. However, despite the increase, the

number of books in this field is still considered insufficient.

Rodrigues Aguilera (2020) conducted research on children's books about disabilities by analyzing efforts to develop a graphic design project aimed at creating innovative solutions for schools serving children with special needs. By combining graphic design and technology, it was possible to create an interactive book that could help children and adolescents with mental disabilities in their learning process and improve their quality of life. The experiment took place at a special school in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The proposed project incorporated the opinions of teachers (obtained through teacher interviews) into the development process and was later tested in the classroom.

Another study conducted by Fajriah et al. (2021) investigated how digital Storytelling was used to help students understand the representation of texts. Data was obtained from the implementation of digital storytelling in teaching narrative texts to first-year high school students in Indonesia as the focus participants. Specifically, this qualitative study adopted the SFL-GBA (Systemic Functional Linguistics-Genre Based Approach) theory as a reference in the teaching and learning process. The results showed that students were guided to interpret the text at all stages of the Genre-Based Approach, particularly in Text Modeling. In this phase, the teacher helped students explore the 'experiences' represented in digital images. In conclusion, digital Storytelling helped students understand how digital images could accommodate the types of processes, participants, and circumstances appropriate to fulfill the social function of narrative texts.

Irawati et al. (2022) also conducted research on compounding formation in children's storybooks. The findings indicated that the compounding found in *Dumbo: The Magical Story* consisted of three types: nominal compounding, verbal compounding, and adjectival compounding. The results showed 48 compound forms, consisting of 25 noun-noun compounds and 23 noun-adjective compounds. There were 6 verb-verb combinations, 4 verb-adjective combinations, 5 verb-noun combinations, and 1 verb-adjective combination. In adjectival compounding, there were 2 adjective-adjective combinations, 3 adverb-adjective combinations, and 1 adjective-adverb combination. Noun-noun compounds were the most common, as the target readers were children, and the words were structured in a way that could be easily understood.

Yuniarti et al. (2023) aimed to develop a vision perception assessment product in the form of a digital book for students with intellectual disabilities, which was expected to measure their abilities, difficulties, and needs in the aspect of visual perception development. The findings showed that the assessment implementation by students with intellectual disabilities scored 96.9%, meaning the product could be used effectively. Based on the research results, the interactive digital book for visual perception assessment for students with intellectual disabilities was deemed appropriate for use.

Children's storybooks also play an important role in shaping children's understanding and perception of the world around them (Horst & Houston-Price, 2015; Maru et al., 2018; Pesonen, 2019). These books are not merely a source of entertainment but also a medium for teaching values, building empathy, and understanding differences. In Indonesia, there has been limited research specifically narrative structure in children's books about disabilities. Therefore, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing children's books about disabilities from the perspective of systemic functional linguistic theory, particularly in the context of narrative structure. This is crucial as it can provide a better understanding of how these books may influence children's thoughts and attitudes toward disabilities.

This research differs from previous studies. It does not only contribute theoretically to the field of systemic functional linguistics, but it also has practical implications for the development of more inclusive and diverse children's reading materials. Therefore, this study is expected to serve as a foundation for developing more diverse and inclusive children's literature in Indonesia, as well as contributing to the understanding of how literature influences children's thoughts and attitudes toward the social diversity present in Indonesia. This study is expected to serve as a foundation for the development of more diverse and inclusive children's literature in Indonesia, as well as contribute to a better understanding of the influence of literature on children's thoughts and attitudes toward the social diversity present in Indonesia.

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach utilizing content analysis. This approach is selected as it allows the researcher to attain an in-depth understanding of the narrative construction and the underlying messages

conveyed within the selected texts. Qualitative procedures were employed to identify the structures of narrative text. Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, the researcher selected children's books about disabilities for analysis. The selection was based on specific criteria, such as the diversity of disabilities represented, the popularity of the books, and their availability in Indonesia. Second, once the books had been chosen, the researcher collected text data from these selected books for further analysis. Based on the aforementioned criteria, the data sources for this research comprised four series of children's books about disabilities as presented in table 1.

Table 1. The Source of the Data

No	Title of the Book	Types of Disability Represented
1	<i>Hira dan Bola Basket</i> (Hira and Basket Ball)	A deaf girl
2	Balon Warna-warni (Colorful balloons)	Autism
3	<i>Cita-cita Nino</i> (Nino's Dream)	A boy with wheelchair
4	<i>Piknik</i> (picnic)	Down syndrome

The data were in the form of text from the book obtained by categorizing the schematic structures of each text. The validity of the was examined through triangulation technique which involves comparing the analysis results among different children's books about disabilities.

Result and Discussion

A narrative text is a type of text that serves to tell a series of events, either fictional or non-fictional, with the aim of entertaining, providing a moral message, or conveying a particular experience (Feez & Joyce, 1998; kaur, 2022; Nacua & Eslit, 2022; Sarwani, 2015; Sinaga & Fitriyani, 2019). Understanding the structure of narrative texts becomes important as it provides a framework for the writer to develop a story with a clear and logical flow. Generally, the structure of a narrative text consists of four main elements: orientation ^ complication ^ resolution ^ coda. The results of the analysis of each text are as follows.

In the first story, the structure of the text consists of orientation ^ complication ^ resolution ^ coda. A character named Hira is clearly depicted in the orientation or introduction section. Hira is portrayed as a person with a disability, specifically hearing impairment. This is supported by several sentences such as, "Yes, I am Hira. I want to join the training here," Hira replies using sign language.

The structure following the orientation is the complication, where the beginning of a conflict or problem arises. The complication is the part where the main conflict or issue in the story starts to emerge (Brisk et al., 2016; Levi et al., 2022). At this stage, the main character is faced with challenges or obstacles that trigger tension in the narrative. The complication is an essential element in narrative texts because it adds dynamics and increases the reader's interest in the plot. The conflict in the complication can be internal (e.g., the protagonist's inner dilemma) or external (e.g., a dispute with another character or nature). In the story above, Hira experiences the peak of the conflict when playing basketball in a match and is knocked down by an opponent.

The resolution stage is when the conflict or problem that arises in the complication begins to be resolved. In this section, the main character may find a solution to the challenges they face or accept the reality of the situation. The resolution can be positive (the problem is resolved) or negative (the problem cannot be resolved). In some stories, the resolution may also be ambiguous, leaving room for the reader to interpret the ending subjectively. The resolution in narrative texts should provide clarity for the plot, allowing readers to feel that the story has a satisfying conclusion or conveys a strong message. In the story above, Hira successfully fulfills the trust given to her by her teammates by making a free throw awarded by the referee.

Although not always found in all narrative texts, coda is often used as a closing part to provide reflection or a moral message from the story. At this stage, the writer can convey lessons learned from the narrative or provide an epilogue that highlights the character's life after the conflict is resolved. It also serves to reaffirm the

main message of the story and provide a more holistic conclusion. In the text above, Hira and her teammates feel happy and grateful for their victory in the basketball match they played.

In the text 2, the narrative tells the story of a child named Asa. This narrative has a structure of orientation ^ complication ^ resolution. A coda is not found in this text; however, this is not problematic since the nature of a coda in narrative text structure is optional. The orientation section discusses disability, highlighted by the use of an inclusive school where Asa attends. An inclusive school is one that integrates students with various needs, including those with special needs, into the general education system. The aim of inclusive education is to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of physical, intellectual, emotional, or social differences, to learn together in a supportive environment (Haug, 2017; Jardinez & Natividad, 2024; Moriña, 2017). In an inclusive school, various strategies and adjustments are applied to ensure that all students can participate and develop according to their potential. Teachers in inclusive schools are usually trained to use diverse and flexible teaching approaches, including providing specialized assistance or learning aids needed by students with special needs.

The complication in this colorful balloon story arises when Asa and her friend, Keiko, get lost, which causes them to cry. This is presented as the peak of the conflict because being lost and not knowing how to get home is a serious situation. The fear of not seeing their parents again or being kidnapped is a common thought that crosses children's minds. The resolution section of this story occurs when Asa and Keiko successfully find their way home because Asa manages to repeat the directions and signs using the color green. This can be seen in the following dialogue:

“Which way back to school?” Asa asks her green balloons.

“Asa knows! Asa knows!”

“Green door.” “Green trash can.”

“Green power pole.”

“Green bench! Let's go get a snack!” Asa invites.

“Wow, running makes me hungry and thirsty!” says Keiko while chewing a snack.

“Green school gate!”

(Source: Book entitled Balon Warna-warni. The dialogue has been translated into English. The original version of the dialogue is in Bahasa Indonesia)

In linguistic terms, the repetition of words that commonly occurs in children is called echolalia. It is a condition where a person inadvertently or repeatedly mimics or repeats words, phrases, or sentences heard from others (Grossi et al., 2013; McFayden et al., 2022; Pruccoli et al., 2021). This often happens without a full understanding of the meaning of what is being repeated. This can occur as part of normal development in young children who are learning to speak, but if it continues into older age, it may be a sign of developmental or neurological disorders (Ganos et al., 2012; Stiegler, 2015). This can also be indicative of a disability.

In the text titled “Cita-cita Nino,” or Nino's dream, the narrative structure is fully present. In the orientation section, the character Nino is introduced as a person with a disability who has a hobby of playing tennis. The complication part of the text tells the story of Nino preparing to participate in a tennis competition. The resolution section shows that Nino successfully becomes the champion in the event. The text concludes with a coda that indicates Nino's strong belief in becoming a great tennis player in the Paralympic event, conveying the message that determination and hard work will yield sweet results.

In the text titled “Piknik,” or picnic, the narrative structure is complete. The orientation introduces the character Dena, a child with a communication disorder who struggles to express her feelings and desires. The complication of the story arises when they go on a picnic, which does not meet expectations due to a misunderstanding between what Dena wants and what her parents and older sibling understand. The resolution of the story reveals that, in the end, Dena's sibling and parents come to understand what Dena truly wants. The story concludes with a coda, where they all feel touched after realizing Dena's true desires.

Table 2. The Narrative Structure of Children's Stories about Disabilities

Text Number	Orientation	Complication	Resolution	Coda
1	√	√	√	√
2	√	√	√	NA
3	√	√	√	√
4	√	√	√	√

Table 2 shows that, out of the four texts analyzed, only text number 2 does not include a coda in its narrative. Although a reorientation or coda is not always found in all narrative texts, it is often used as a closing part to provide reflection or a moral message from the story. At this stage, the writer can convey lessons learned from the narrative or provide an epilogue that highlights the character's life after the conflict is resolved.

Conclusion and Suggestion

The conclusion drawn is that, out of the four texts analyzed, only text number 2 does not include a coda in its structure. Although a coda is not always present in all narrative texts, it is often used as a closing part to provide a reflection or moral message from the story. At this stage, the writer can convey lessons that can be learned from the narrative. It can be suggested that authors of narrative texts, particularly those intended for children, should consider including a coda in their stories.

A coda can enhance the narrative by providing a moral lesson or reflection, thereby encouraging readers to engage more deeply with the themes presented. Future studies could analyze a larger corpus of narrative texts to investigate the prevalence and impact of codas in children's literature, as well as the influence of specific lexicogrammatical features on reader comprehension and enjoyment. Future research could also explore the inclusion of diverse perspectives in narrative texts, particularly in stories about disabilities.

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